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ABSTRACT

Teachers who had received a specialized preparation for middle level teaching were studied to determine the effectiveness of such a preparation program and to help form a knowledge base from which teacher education institutions could document, design, and implement middle level preparation programs. The paper reviews the literature investigating the development of middle schools, and then describes a program for middle level teacher preparation at a large Midwestern state university, involving 25 undergraduate elementary education students. Special features of the program included: (1) study of the nature and needs of early adolescence; (2) study of the principles and practices of effective middle level education as well as curriculum and instruction; (3) methods courses taught by instructors familiar with teaching at the middle level; (4) academic concentrations in at least two areas; (5) field experience for special methods at both urban and suburban middle level schools as well as student teaching; and (6) specific attention to interaction and communication within the program. The study results indicated the effectiveness of a specialized middle level teacher preparation program and the ability of college and universities to establish such programs even with existing elementary or secondary education programs. Further, the large majority of participants securing jobs in middle schools indicate that there is a need and desire for teachers prepared especially to meet the unique requirements of middle level education. Finally, the results revealed an overwhelming satisfaction among participants with their specialized program; they felt well prepared and able to handle the stress and frustrations in the first year of teaching. (Contains 34 references.) (ND)

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"A Step Above the Rest . . ."
Specialized Middle Level Preparation

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"A Step Above the Rest"
Specialized Middle Level Preparation

Introduction

There has long been recognition that children at different developmental levels have common needs and interests and that teachers can and should be trained to work specifically with those needs and interests. That is the basis for early childhood education, elementary education and secondary education. It is also widely recognized that children entering the period known as early adolescence, too, have specific developmental needs and interests which are unique to that age group (Eichhorn, 1966, 1987; Manning, 1988; Bromberg, et.al., 1980; Phelps, 1980; Lipsitz, 1977). Because students at this developmental level have these variable needs and interests, many believe that teachers with a different type of education are also needed (Carnegie Task Force, 1989; Eichhorn, 1966, 1987; NMSA, 1982; Orlosky, 1988; Alexander & McEwin, 1988; McEwin & Thomason, 1989).

The number of middle level schools in the United States has been reported by Pisko (1984) as being in excess of 12,000, but this growth has not been matched by a similar growth in specialized middle level teacher preparation programs. In fact, progress in the number of programs and enrollments in such programs has been very slow - only one-half percent per year from 1973 to 1987 (NMSA, 1986). At least three reasons have been commonly cited for this reluctance: 1) narrowing the focus of preparation (K-3, 4-8 and 9-12) will limit graduates' employability; 2) concerns of proponents for middle level preparation programs over developmental understanding and subject matter concentration are currently addressed by new

elementary standards; 3) the inadequacy of the knowledge base that would warrant a change from the traditional two-level preparation program. Further, it is commonly believed that in this time of decreasing budgets in colleges and universities across the country, adding another program would be simply be too costly.

There have been a number of studies completed in the past ten to fifteen years which look at the competency areas necessary for effective teaching at the middle level (Brogden, 1978; Boyer, 1983; Gretes, Queen & Duguano, 1983; Clark & Jones, 1986). Research which addresses the attitudes that graduates of elementary or secondary teacher preparation programs reports a belief that field experiences make a more significant contribution to professional development (Book, Byers, and Freeman, 1983) and that teacher preparation programs only marginally contributed to the attainment of effective teacher characteristics (Callahan, 1980). However, this author could discover none which examined teacher effectiveness and satisfaction of induction year teachers trained in a specialized middle level preparation program. Therefore, several questions emerged: Do middle level teachers trained in a specialized middle level preparation program:

1) perceive their preparation program as appropriate and effective as they complete their first year of teaching?
2) feel satisfaction and success after their first year of teaching?
3) continue to use the teaching strategies and practices consistent with the characteristics of effective middle level teaching? and
4) plan to remain teaching at the middle grades?

Purpose

These questions are among those which have sparked a growing debate over the necessity of specialized middle level education in state departments of education and certification and in teacher education institutions and journals. This debate seems to be intensified by what teacher education institutions regard as a lack of quantitative evidence supporting a specialized middle level program. It would appear, therefore, that a study of teachers who received a specialized preparation for middle level teaching would be an appropriate beginning to determine the effectiveness of such a preparation program and be of assistance in the formulation of a knowledge base from which teacher education institutions could document, design, and implement middle level preparation programs.

Background

A significant movement in school organization and programs during the early years of this century was the shift from a two-level elementary and secondary system (K-8 and 9-12) to a three-level- elementary, junior and senior high school system. Although junior high schools were founded partially on the principle that early adolescents had unique needs and interest, some educators by the 1960's contended that considering the junior high school as a junior division of the high school resulted in a lack of recognition and identity for the transitional school, a high school-like instructional program that was largely incompatible with early adolescence, and inadequate preparation of teachers. These educators insisted that a unique level of schooling needed to exist apart from secondary and elementary schools in order to meet the needs of the early adolescent. This insistence gave birth to the middle school movement (Eichhorn, 1980) during the 1960's.

As the number of middle level schools rose steadily during the late 1960's and 1970's, concern was again expressed that if middle level schools were to escape the failings of the earlier transitional schools (the junior highs), their unique instructional philosophy had to be accompanied by teachers who are interested in and trained for teaching the early adolescent (George, et.al., 1975; NMSA, 1982; St. Clair, 1984; Honig, 1987; Alexander & McEwin, 1988; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). In effective middle level schools, traditional basic skills education is replaced by utilization of interdisciplinary teaming, multi-age grouping, exploratory curriculum and teachers as advisors (Ashton, et. al. in Erb, 1981). This is what makes middle level education unique.

The question then surfaces, are teachers now prepared adequately to meet the needs of these basic and unique practices? Research suggests that middle level classrooms continue to be staffed primarily by those whose training and interests lie either at the elementary or secondary levels (Valentine, Clark, Nickerson, & Keefe, 1981; McEwin & Clay, 1982). McEwin and Clay (1982) reported from their national survey of middle level principals that 61% of those responding indicated having no teachers in their schools with specialized preparation in middle level schooling. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989) reported similar findings.

Research indicates that the inadequate supply of specifically prepared middle level teachers is directly due to the fact that programs for specialized preparation of middle level teachers have not kept pace with the growing number of middle level schools. In Alexander and McEwin's 1986 survey of 504 American Association of Colleges of Teacher Educators [AACTE] member institutions (1987), only 168 responded as having middle level preparation programs. This figure represents 33% of the respondents, but only about 15% of the total AACTE membership.

As noted in the introduction above, teacher education institutions insist that the two-level approach to teacher preparation that now predominates in the United States is sufficient. Supporters of specialized middle level preparation, however, contend that elementary teachers do not have an adequate grasp of the subject matter needed to prepare middle level students for high school (NMSA, 1986). For example, an elementary program with a concentration in English/language arts might require as few as 20 quarter credit hours (6 or 7 classes), whereas a secondary English education program may require 58 quarter credit hours (19-20 classes). In addition, supporters of specialized middle level preparation suggests that, while secondary teachers may have the subject matter base, they lack the psychology and teaching methods appropriate for the middle grades (NMSA, 1986).

As this controversy continues, a number of studies have been completed which look at the components of teacher education perceived to be essential for effective middle level teaching (Brogdon, 1978; Boyer, 1983; Gretes, Queen, & Daguana, 1983; Clark & Jones, 1986; NASSP, 1981, 1983). Boyer (1983) surveyed 90 middle level teachers in Pennsylvania to discover what they perceived necessary in middle level preparation. She found the following areas of instruction rated as either "highly valuable" or "valuable" by 90% of those surveyed:

(1) Social/emotional needs and characteristics of emerging adolescents;

(2) Psychology and nature of emerging adolescents;

(3) Intellectual needs and characteristics of emerging adolescents;

(4) Physical needs and characteristics of emerging adolescents;

(5) Classroom management/discipline; and

(6) Methods and materials especially appropriate to middle level studies.

From that same study, fifty percent or more reported having no specialized preparation in the areas of exploratory activities, or guidance and counseling techniques (in Alexander & McEwin, 1988).

Another study by Gretes, Queen, & Daguana (1983) surveyed 466 first year middle grade teachers in North Carolina to investigate their preservice-service programs in relation to their first year teaching. When asked to identify what could have been added to their preservice-service program to make it more valuable, middle school teachers identified "survival skills" (33.9%) [undefined by authors] and more field experience earlier in their academic experiences (31.8%). The authors concluded that one reason for this result was that many of these teachers did not receive specific preparation for teaching at the middle level. Almost half (47.5%) of these same respondents reported not being given a realistic picture of what their first year of teaching would be like.

Clark and Jones (1986) later confirmed an earlier study by Clark and Clark (1982) which suggested that middle level teachers saw as most vital to their preservice education four areas of instruction:

(1) Discipline and classroom management;

(2) Student teaching at the middle level;

(3) Adolescent psychology/characteristics of the middle level learner; and

(4) Teaching methods of the middle school.

Surveys conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1981 and 1983 noted course preparation needed by middle level teachers. The number one and two rated courses in each of these surveys were psychology of the middle level student and teaching

methods for the middle level student (Alexander & McEwin, 1988). In 1987, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) position paper declared:

> "Middle level youngsters require special kinds of attention and teaching. Therefore, it is important that only the very best teachers - those who understand the subjects they teach and the development of early adolescents - be permitted to work with these dynamic youngsters...[their] preparation must include study in human development, counseling, differentiating instruction, classroom management, and home-school cooperation" (1987, p.13).

In each of these studies and documents as well as others, a familiar thread appears. Middle level teachers need specialized middle level preparation in five vital areas as identified by Alexander & McEwin (1988, p.48):

(1) Thorough study of the nature and needs of early adolescence,

(2) Middle level curriculum and instruction,

(3) Broad academic background, including concentrations in a least two academic areas at the undergraduate level;

(4) Specialized methods and reading courses; and

(5) Early and continuing field experiences in good middle schools.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) appeared to agree when they approved guidelines for the specialized preparation of middle level educators to which institutions seeking accreditation must respond beginning in the spring, 1992. According to these recently adopted NCATE standards (NMSA, 1989), specialized middle level teacher preparation programs should include: "(1) An in-depth study of the developmental stage of early adolescence, (2) knowledge of middle level philosophy and curriculum/instruction, (3) content knowledge in at least one broad teaching field, (4) field experience at the middle level" (p.2).

Program Background

During the academic year, 1993-1994, twenty five undergraduate elementary education students applied for admission to and were accepted as part of a cohort group which would focus on middle level teacher preparation at a large Midwestern state institution. These students were required to meet all the guidelines for undergraduate admissions to the elementary education program, including GPA, prerequisite courses, and third year (junior) status. In addition, these students expressed an explicit interest in working with children in grades 4-8, the middle level.

The program was designed within an existing three quarter undergraduate elementary teacher education program where students were enrolled in special methods courses for language arts, reading, math, science, and social studies. There were several features built into the specialized middle level teacher preparation program which were not present in the traditional generalist (1-8) elementary education program. This features included:

(1). study of the nature and needs of early adolescence. In this adolescent development course, students conducted a case study investigation of one child as well as numerous whole class focused observations.

(2). study of not only middle level curriculum and instruction, but the principles and practices of effective middle level education. They were required to work in collaborative teams to analyze an emerging middle school for the effective practices and develop a multimedia presentation of their findings for the entire class. Frequently, the principals and teachers of the schools participated in this analysis as well.

(3). methods courses taught by instructors familiar with teaching at the middle level, modelling effective middle level practices, with required clinical and field experiences in

implementing effective middle level instructional planning and strategies.

(4). academic concentrations in two areas. Although not required by the university, approximately 90% of the students in the middle level education program had concentrations in at least two academic areas at the undergraduate level.

(5). field experience placements for the two quarter sequence of special methods conducted at both urban and suburban middle level schools as well as during student teaching. While at the field placements, students were teamed within teams of teachers (3 students per team of teachers), worked in teams on various projects, and collaboratively wrote and implemented integrated, interdisciplinary units of instruction.

(6). specific attention to interaction and communication within the program was given a high priority. To ensure an effective field experience for the students for example, university instructors worked with cooperating teachers and principals to establish the requirements and expectations, to assist in the supervisory process, and to address issues and concerns that arose. Students met weekly with the university program coordinator, and often the instructors, to discuss issues and problems encountered during class or field experiences and to share ideas. This emphasis on collaboration and communication continued into the third quarter student teaching practicum. Although not enrolled in any other class during the student teaching practicum, regularly scheduled discussion seminars were attended throughout the third quarter. A concerted effort was made to maintain a high level of communication between cooperating teacher, university supervisor, and student teacher during student teaching.

Procedure

As the students graduated and began to secure teaching positions, I wondered if the

program developed would be viewed by the students themselves as a success. Would they see it as making a difference in the all important first year of teaching? Would they report satisfaction and achievement after one year of teaching? With that in mind, a longitudinal study was undertaken with the graduates from this specialized middle level teacher preparation program. The study was two-pronged: first, a survey was distributed to each member of the cohort group and second, in-depth focused interviews were conducted with three members of the group.

The survey included demographic information, Likert-type questions to rate the program and their use of specific middle level practices, and opportunities to respond to open-ended questions. The survey was mailed to two addresses for each student - the permanent address on university records and the last local address - in order to assure a better delivery rate. A return rate of 63 percent was achieved.

Focused interviews lasting approximately one hour were conducted with three randomly selected graduates of the program. The interview consisted of eight broadly worded questions. Responses were audio-taped and recorded by two interviewers using rough field notes. Although each subject in the case study interview sample had completed one year of contracted teaching, few other demographic characteristics were similar. The sample consisted of two females and one male, two of the subjects were in their early 20's while the third was a nontraditional induction year teacher in her early 40's. While all three subjects were teaching in the middle level grades, one had a partially self-contained fifth grade classroom and was responsible primarily for instruction in language arts and science. The other two subjects were teaching in seventh grade classrooms, one teaching language arts and the other teaching math, science and health. The middle level schools in which the subjects were teaching were also diverse: one was a located in a

small rural community, another in a suburban community, while the third teaching site was a large urban middle school.

Results

Survey

The mailed survey was divided into three parts. Part I revealed demographic information, Part II was designed to measure satisfaction and attitudes about specific aspects of the teacher preparation program; and Part III elicited responses to perceptions regarding overall satisfaction and a self-report on specific middle school practices in use by the respondent. From Part I of the survey, it was revealed that 33% of the respondents did not teach in the year immediately following their student teaching. Of those respondents reporting that they were not currently teaching, 35% graduated from the university during the academic year and only one was not planning to teach the following year. Of the 66% who were employed as teachers in the academic year following their student teaching, all but one were teaching at the middle level. All reported that they would be teaching the following year.

Part II included responses from both those respondents who were employed teaching and those who were not. The statements used a Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (4.0) to strongly disagree (1.0). Overall, the responses revealed generally a very positive attitude about critical aspects of the preservice program (Table 1). For example, regarding the respondents' belief that they "received a strong foundation for teaching", 58.3% reported that they strongly agreed while 48.6% agreed. As in research cited previously, the strongest positive responses had to do with two statements focused on field experiences in the middle school settings (76.92% on both items reported "strongly agree"). Another highlight of the program for the respondents

Table 1

Attitudes and Perceptions of Preservice Program

Strategy	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
received a sound foundation	58.33	41.67	0.00	0.00
valuable field experiences	76.92	15.38	7.69	0.00
variety of field placements was helpful	76.92	23.08	0.00	0.00
communication between faculty and students	15.38	76.92	7.69	0.00
communication between university and field placement sites	7.69	69.23	15.38	7.69
cohort group interaction	69.23	23.08	7.69	0.00
peer collaboration on requirements	53.85	38.46	7.69	0.00
university supervision	30.77	38.46	15.38	15.38
course instructors as supervisors	53.85	46.15	0.00	0.00
satisfied with preparation program	53.85	46.15	0.00	0.00

seemed to be working within collaborative teams and the cohort group. Fully 92.3% responded positively to the statements "a strong aspect of the teacher preparation program was the cohort group interaction" and "the collaboration on various projects assisted in my learning about teaching". The one area which indicated a somewhat lack of satisfaction by 30.7% of the respondents was the impact and role of the university supervisor. With regard to overall satisfaction with the teacher preparation, 100% indicated positively that they were "very satisfied".

Part III looked at the responses (attitudes and perceptions) of those respondents who were employed full or part-time during the academic year immediately following their student teaching. Again a four point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (4.0) to strongly disagree (1.0) was used with 14 statements focusing on the relationship of their current practice with that

which they learned and practiced during their teacher preparation program. Regarding general aspects of their preparation program, positive responses were reported: 100% said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statements "my university teacher preparation program prepared me for my first year teaching" and ". . . prepared me to work effectively with children from diverse backgrounds"; and 77.7% indicated positive responses to the statements "my teacher preparation program prepared me to deal with behavioral problems in the classroom" and "the information gained in my methods classes has been very helpful . . ." Respondents were less satisfied with the preparation program giving them a realistic perspective of what the first year of teaching would be like: 75% agreed and 25% disagreed with the statement.

When asked about the kinds of instructional strategies they currently employ in their classroom, respondents revealed that they took those effective practices learned about and modeled in their preparation program and employed them in their classrooms. Table 2 reveals responses to the kinds of instructional strategies respondents employed frequently in their

Table 2
Frequently Used Instructional Strategies

Strategy	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
cooperative learning	55.56	44.44	0.00	0.00
interdisciplinary units	50.00	37.50	12.50	0.00
discovery learning	44.44	22.22	22.22	11.11
literature across the curriculum	33.33	44.44	22.22	0.00
workbook/ditto sheets	22.22	11.11	44.44	11.11
student initiated topics	50.00	37.50	12.50	0.00
"hands-on" learning	66.67	33.33	0.00	0.00

classrooms. Responses indicate modes of instruction used frequently correspond with those

found as effective for middle learners. The respondents' use of collaboration was also positive: for unit planning (66.66%); in team teaching (55.55%), advisory activities (66.66%) and student development (77.77%). Generally, respondents had a positive belief in their abilities to perform critical teacher/teaching functions (Table 3). Interesting is the strong positive belief respondents have regarding their ability to manage student behaviors, an often cited area of concern for traditionally prepared teachers. Finally, respondents were asked to indicate areas where they

Table 3
Perceived Areas of Strength

Strategy	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
management of time/resources	11.11	77.78	11.11	0.00
management of student behavior	11.11	88.89	0.00	0.00
using varied strategies	66.67	22.22	0.00	0.00
curriculum (unit/lesson) planning	44.44	55.56	0.00	0.00
curriculum development (innovation/change)	11.11	77.78	11.11	0.00
collaboration with peers	75.00	0.00	25.00	0.00
parent/community relations	22.22	55.56	22.22	0.00

perceive need for growth (Table 4). These responses indicate a desire to continue to learn about and grow in areas of teaching about which they already hold generally positive perceptions of their abilities.

Finally, respondent indicated being satisfied with their first year of teaching (66.78% "strongly agree" and 33.33% "agree") and with their training as preparation for their first year of teaching (55.56% "strongly agree" and 44.44% "agree").

Table 4
Perceived Need for Continued Growth

Strategy	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
management of time/resources	11.11	11.11	77.78	0.00
management of student behavior	44.44	44.44	11.00	0.00
using varied strategies	11.11	22.22	33.33	33.33
curriculum (unit/lesson) planning	0.00	11.11	66.67	22.22
curriculum development (innovation/change)	11.11	11.11	77.78	0.00
collaboration with peers	11.11	22.22	44.44	22.22
parent/community relations	44.44	22.22	11.11	22.22

Focused Interviews

The three focused interviews consisted of eight broadly worded questions designed to encourage respondents to consider aspects of the professional preparation program which directly impacted their first year of teaching (Figure 1). The first question revealed demographic

1. Tell us about your school and your current teaching position.
2. In your preservice teacher preparation, what aspect of the program was particularly helpful in your first year teaching? What would you have liked to have experienced (or known about) before you got your first teaching position which you did not?
3. What have you found to be particularly difficult about your first year teaching?
4. What specifically have you been able to utilize in your classroom/first year teaching that you had experience with or learned from your teacher preparation program?
5. Upon facing a problem or issue in the classroom, how did you go about solving or resolving it?
6. Have you changed any philosophical beliefs or have you made any compromises or adaptations in your teaching this year? How did that come about - what prompted it?
7. We're going to ask you some very general questions regarding your first year experience. Generally, how satisfied are you with your first year teaching experience? How successful do you believe you have been? What factors contribute to either or both the feelings of satisfaction and success?
8. Overall, if you were to make any general or specific comment regarding your preparation program, what would you want to say?

Figure 1

information about their current teaching assignment. Aspects of the preparation program reported as particularly helpful addressed such things as knowledge of adolescent development, classroom management, and teaching strategies. Each subject noted collaboration among peers and developing interdisciplinary units of instruction as very important skills aiding success during their first year of teaching.

> **"The focus of middle level education made me feel very knowledgeable about middle level education, teaching, and interdisciplinary planning . . ."**
>
> **"I appreciated the close knit group [working relationships] and the good rapport between faculty and students . . ."**
>
> **"Learning about strategies, participating in them on campus, and then being able to try them in the field was very helpful . . ."**

The most difficult aspect of their first year teaching was unanimous . . . time management!

Each of the three interviewees commented on the need for more "content specific" background, but noted that being able to work with teams of teachers partially helped to compensate. Also, although it was noted that knowledge and skills working with special needs populations was lacking in their preparation program, inclusion (that is, working closely with a special educator) was very comfortable due to the types of collaborative experiences they had during their preparation program. The team collaboration also was addressed by the subjects when asked how they go about resolving and issue or problem. Each of the respondents discussed a process of self-reflection and communication and collaboration with peers. They sought out mentors and worked to establish close working relationships with members of their teaching teams.

"Establishing a close relationship is who I am . . . it's what I know."

"I talked to others . . . peers. I found specific people depending on the issue or problem. Having the experience with peer collaboration helped alot . . ."

Each of the respondents noted integrated, interdisciplinary thematic units as a skill developed during teacher preparation that they relied upon during their first year of teaching. In addition, using collaborative and small group activities, involving parents, advisory activities, establishing routines, reading aloud, using short, planned teacher centered mini-lessons, team teaching, and focusing on various student centered, active learning strategies were among those specific practices noted as in effect in their classrooms during the first year of teaching.

Recommendations which these three respondents made included more teaching or instructional materials development, information and experience with inclusion, and time management strategies. General comments about the program included: the significance of the cohort concept (collaboration, establishing close personal and professional relationships); the comfort with the supervision process (knowledge of, skills in, and comfort with being observed); and the importance of varied field experiences in diverse settings.

"I knew what to expect when I stepped into an urban classroom . . . there were very few surprises. I knew how to establish a discipline/management plan, how to establish parent involvement, . . . I was comfortable setting up my classroom."

"I can't imagine why any university wouldn't want to implement a program like ours . . . When I had a PAR (Peer Assistance and Review - first year mentoring program) evaluation I was never bothered by someone watching me. I had learned to be prepared . . . "

"Last year we [students] didn't always appreciate what we were asked to do - teaming, developing collaborative interdisciplinary plans, advisory . . . Now, the picture is very clear."

Each of the subjects interviewed maintained a strong sense of satisfaction with their first year of teaching and believe they were successful. The factors contributing to their feelings of success and satisfaction included the kinds and amount of field experiences, the specific activities and requirements of the program, and their confidence and knowledge of the middle level learner and effective middle school practices.

Discussion

Studies cited have addressed the necessity of specialized middle level teacher preparation which is unique from that of either secondary or elementary preparation programs. It is recommended that the curricular components of such a specialized program should reflect the concern that middle level teachers have a thorough background in human development as it pertains to the early adolescent learner, middle level teaching techniques and strategies, depth of content preparation, and more specific middle level field experience. Other studies have reported a dissatisfaction with teacher preparation programs generally for not meeting the needs of the first year or induction year teacher.

This study appears to indicate the effectiveness of a specialized middle level teacher preparation program and the ability of colleges and universities to establish such programs even with existing elementary or secondary education programs. Further, with an overwhelming majority of participants securing jobs in middle schools, it could also be assumed that there is a need and desire for teachers prepared especially to meet the unique requirements of middle level education. Finally, both the self-reporting survey and the focused interviewed revealed an overwhelming satisfaction with their specialized program.

Perhaps the most satisfying and significant aspect of the data for this author was the

apparent transfer of knowledge, skills, and attitudes introduced and developed in the teacher preparation program to the first year of teaching. Respondents felt prepared and able to handle the stress and frustrations which generally accompanies the first year in the profession. They reported using frequently those instructional practices consistent with effective middle level practices, not relying heavily on less effective strategies such as workbooks and ditto sheets. Also significant, and satisfying, is that the respondents who were currently employed in teaching planned to continue in the teaching profession and except for one, those not currently employed were seeking teaching positions.

The generalizability of these findings is, of course, limited. This was one program built within an existing teacher education program framework. For the most part, students in the program had a predisposition for teaching at the middle level - they chose to participate in the strand for middle level education. It also does not compare the satisfaction of this group to that of another trained during the same time period. It does, however, give a clear message that students can be trained to meet the unique needs of middle level education and the early adolescent and, with that training, the induction year can be a smoother, more rewarding experience than might otherwise be expected. As one of the survey respondents remarked,

> **"[When I was looking for a job] I felt like I had already had a few years of experience in the teaching field. The professional experience that I had before I graduated put me . . . a step above the rest. "**

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